

The Anne Arundel REALTOR®

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ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® INC.
Promoting Excellence in Real Estate Service Since 1941



July/August 2006

REALTORS® Profit From 8th Annual Real Estate Convention

Attendees to the 2006 AACAR Real Estate Convention gained knowledge, CE credits, and new business contacts this year at the event, held at the Anne Arundel Community College. Staff and vendors really got into the rodeo theme this year, with bails of hay, saddles and cowboy hats as evidence, and a great time was had by all.

Here at AACAR, we received a tremendous amount of positive feedback this year, as well as good suggestions that we'll use to improve the event next year. Sandy Sadler of Coldwell Banker Pasadena, who had quite a few agents from her office attend, said, "My team loves the trade show. We had 14 agents attend and I don't have any negative comments!" Many REALTORS® who attended for the first time commented on the ease of getting 6 hours of continuing education credit and how pleasant and enthusiastic the vendors were.

Pat Savani of Champion Realty in Annapolis commented on the "excellent diversity of topics" offered for continuing education credit. Quite a few new classes were offered this year. The class "The Basics of Going Global," taught by Angela Eliopoulos of Long and Foster received wonderful reviews, and we didn't have enough room for all the REALTORS® who wanted to take "MD Real Estate Contract Law," taught by Alan MacDonald. We are planning to offer this class again at the Association in September.

It was a successful day for all involved thanks to the hard work of the convention committee, volunteers, generous sponsors, and the staff at AACAR. Thank you to all who helped out and all who attended. We'll see you next year!

► For photos from the event, turn to pages 9 and 10.

Please Note Zip Code Change on Listings!

Effective July 1st, all listings in Annapolis east of the Severn River (Area 53) should be entered into MRIS under the new zip code...21409. Please revise any current listings you have that apply. We will all benefit from everyone's cooperation on this matter. Let's make this a smooth transition!

The addition of the new zip code is due to rapid growth and development in and around Annapolis, according to officials with the U.S. Postal Service. "We're approaching the maximum number of people who can be served under the existing code, so in order to maintain our current level of service, we have to add a new five-digit code," said Bob Novak, a spokesman for the postal service. The Postal Service adds 30 to 40 new zip codes per year nationwide.

On July 1, about 7,000 residents residing on the Broadneck Peninsula will say goodbye to the 21401 code they have used since 1963. Residents will still get mail sent to the old code for a year after the shift. After that, mail sent to the old code will have to be forwarded and might take longer than usual to arrive.

The postal service will send an informational post card to all affected customers and also plans to hold a community meeting to explain the change.

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AACAR Staff Directory

Tom Quattlebaum, CAE, RCE
Chief Executive Officer
Association Policy and Governance
Professional Standards
tomq@aacar.com

Carole Davis
Membership Administrator
GRI Coordinator
Membership Records,
Dues Waivers, GRI series
cdavis@aacar.com

Robert Johnston, RCE
Vice President of Government Affairs
Legislation, RPAC
Robert.johnston@aacar.com

Bonnie Mueller
Accountant
Billing, Member Accounts
bmueller@aacar.com

Kelly Zenzen
Executive Assistant
Ethics & Arbitration Requests
Committee Roster & Scheduling
Event Scheduling
kellyz@aacar.com

Cindy Myers
Key Administrator
Key Services, REALTOR® Store
cmyers@aacar.com

Erin Kraemer
Communications Coordinator
Continuing Education, Newsletter,
Website, Membership Rosters,
Daytimer, Convention
erink@aacar.com

Phone 410-544-4554
Fax 410-647-5102
www.aacar.com

A Message From Your President ...

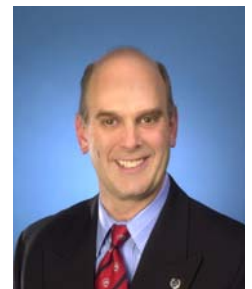
Many thanks to those who organized and attended our 8th annual Real Estate Now Convention on June 7th at Anne Arundel Community College. Each year this event gets better and better. I want to give special thanks to Michelle Raines of Home First Title Group, and her very capable convention committee, for really “stepping up” this year and making our convention such a successful event. This year’s convention, themed “Round ‘Em Up”, was attended by 528 REALTORS® and licensees. Those attending were treated to breakfast, lunch and hors d’oeuvres at the cocktail reception where many vendor’s prizes were raffled. The educational sessions were well attended and the survey comments were very favorable, especially for the AM developer panel concerning the adequacy of public facilities and the PM broker panel concerning current trends and issues in our industry. During breaks, realtors took advantage of the opportunity to mingle with the 62 vendors who took time from their busy schedule to display their merchandise and services.

One of the major benefits in attending our annual convention is the opportunity to earn up to 6 hours of continuing education credit. According to the website posted by the State of Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation (DLLR), a licensee with less than 10 years experience must complete 15 clock hours of continuing education instruction to qualify for license renewal. A licensee who has been licensed 10 years or more must complete 6 clock hours of continuing education instruction if their license renews on or before 10/1/2006, 9 clock hours of continuing education instruction if their license renews on or before 10/1/2008 or 15 clock hours of continuing education instruction if their license renews on or after 10/2/2008. So plan to attend our convention in June 2007 and get a head start on your continuing education requirements.

I hope to see many of you at our next major association event, the 20th Annual Billy Goodall Charity Golf Tournament on July 10th at the South River Golf Links. This is our major fund raiser of the year and all proceeds are donated to charities located in Anne Arundel County. Past charity recipients include REALTORS Scholarship at Anne Arundel Community College, AAMC Breast Care Center, 100 Club, Harvest for the Hungry, Friends of Arundel Seniors, Sarah’s House and Habitat for Humanity. Even if you are not a golfer or sponsor, come on out for some fun and camaraderie at our mid-afternoon luncheon and awards ceremony where many prizes will be raffled. It’s all for a great cause.

“One of the major benefits in attending our annual convention is the opportunity to earn up to 6 hours of continuing education credit.”

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Dave Wright,
AACAR President

Have A Safe, Enjoyable and Prosperous Summer.

You Be the Judge



Case #10-3: Equal Professional Services by the REALTOR® (Revised November, 2001.)

REALTOR® A was contacted by Prospect C, a female head of household, concerning a home for sale which was advertised during the previous week in the newspaper's classified real estate section. When informed by REALTOR® A that the home in question had already been sold, Prospect C asked to be shown homes in the \$80,000 to \$90,000 price range with three bedrooms and located near schools and playgrounds. REALTOR® A proceeded to show Prospect C a number of homes which met her stated criteria for price range, size, and location, but Prospect C was interested in none of them.

Shortly thereafter, Prospect C filed a complaint with the Board of REALTORS® against REALTOR® A, complaining that he had violated Article 10 of the Code of Ethics by failing to offer equal professional service to her because she was a woman. Prospect C contended that she did not receive the same professional service from REALTOR® A that would have been afforded to a male head of household and home seeker with the same criteria for price range, size, and location.

The complaint was referred to the Grievance Committee and after its preliminary review and evaluation, the Grievance Committee referred it to the Secretary and directed that a

hearing be arranged before a Hearing Panel of the Professional Standards Committee. The Secretary made the necessary arrangements and provided the proper notices and opportunity for response by REALTOR® A.

At the hearing, Prospect C expressed her complaint and concluded by saying, "It was obvious to me that REALTOR® A discriminated against me because I am a woman. In my opinion, he showed little interest in helping me to find a home."

REALTOR® A responded that he was sorry that Prospect C had that opinion, but that certainly he held no such attitude as charged. REALTOR® A advised the Hearing Panel that he routinely utilized a contact report for each prospect which includes identification information on the clients, provides data on the price range, type of house and location preferred by the prospect, and records the homes shown to the prospect with information on the price, type, and location of each home shown. REALTOR® A presented several such reports from his files including the report pertaining to Prospect C. Prospect C's report showed that several homes shown to her met the data as supplied by her.

The Hearing Panel concluded that REALTOR® A's documented evidence did, in fact, establish a clear position in which equal professional service had been offered and that no violation of Article 10 had occurred.



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Keypad access is now available!

How **Do** you work those Blue Lock Boxes?

Q. What is the iBox?

A. The Supra iBox is Supra's newest keybox. It uses Infrared communication technology so you can "point and beam" rather than placing your keypad on the keybox. It works just like your TV remote control. And just like the remote control, it was developed to make your job easier!



Q. What are the benefits of the iBox?

A. Supra has made quite a few advancements in the iBox. It is small outside, but larger inside; you can put up to three keys inside. The chain is attached to the middle of the box, not the side, to prevent jamming. You will be able to program different hours for weekdays and weekends, and you can even leave electronic notes for the showing agents: i.e. "Alarm code is...", "Take shoes off." The iBox is compatible with many more devices than the AEII (the grey box) and stores 150% more information on who has accessed the key. The best part? It looks great! The slate blue color shows less wear and tear than those old grey boxes.

Q. Does the Supra Keypad that we use work on the blue iBox?

A. Yes, the keypad that you already have will work on the iBox because it is compatible with the infrared technology. It's actually easier to use than the older grey boxes.

Q. How do you use the keypad with the blue iBox?

A. Simply point your keypad at the front of the iBox like you are using a remote control. We suggest holding it 6-12 inches away from the box, but it will work if you hold it closer or further away. After communicating with the box, your key will tell you to push the bottom to release the key. Use your hand to push on the bottom of the box and the keybox will pop out.

Q. Can I buy the iBox at AACAR?

A. Yes, we have iBoxes available for purchase. The cost is \$105.00. You can stop by any time during our business hours (9:00AM-5:00PM, Mon-Fri) to pick up an iBox. If you need more than one or two, call ahead of time to check availability and we can program them for you in advance.

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Words of Encouragement

How Do You Market Yourself? A Website?

A lot of agents now have their own websites.

They count on this to generate business for them. Even though they may be in a large company that has many tools, including websites....agents like the feeling of "doing it on their own".

When generating a lead you need to ask yourself, is this the sole purpose of your site or a small piece of your marketing mix. When answering that question, remember, it is almost always about answering a prospect's unspoken questions and communicating your value to them so they end up doing business with you.

Most clients will do their research online so they don't have to interact with someone. Sometimes, you should think of your clients as the most introverted people you ever knew. They have come to you with curiosity, and expectations that you will understand what they need and lead them along a comfortable path of contract fulfillment.

Can the design, architecture and content of your website convince visitors you're valuable to them so they give something of value to you in return by becoming prospective clients (a lead!)? Here are seven suggestions to get you started.

The Persuasive Process

When you institute the persuasive process, always begin by answering the same basic questions:

- Who do you need to persuade?
- What are you persuading them to do?

When the goal is generating leads, you usually want to persuade your prospective clients to fill in a contact form, register, opt in to a newslet-

ter, or be placed on your e-mail list.

Once you have generated the answers that represent your "who"s, and have identified the action you want them to take, you then attempt to answer the third question:

- How can you most effectively persuade them?

1. The Message Must Be Relevant - Identify what really matters to your visitors. What motivates them to seek you out? What problems do you solve for them? What friction points do you reduce for them? Identify the benefits and value your products or services confer. Find your visitors' buttons, then push them by serving up a nice, juicy, relevant message.

2. No Jargon - Unless you're marketing to a select audience that absolutely requires you to communicate credibility via insider-speak (jargon), stay away from the stuff. Jargon convinces folks you aren't really interested in talking to them, so they're far less likely to pay attention. If you must include specific terminology, give it a low profile. Those wanting to know if you can really talk the talk will look to find it (and yes, you should have a place for this on your site).

3. Don't "We" All Over Yourself - The first rule of online success is it's never about you. Brilliant as you and your business may be, focus on the clients. Let them know you understand their needs and what matters to them. Put them center stage. Want a thumbnail view of how customer-focused the language on your site is? Try the "Customer Focus Calculator" at <http://www.futurenowinc.com/wewe.htm>. It identifies how often your copy brags about things like, "We are the best, we are the original."

4. Keep It Need-to-Know - When it comes to clients, ask for as little information as possible. You probably WANT to everything from name to shoe size. You can certainly ask for it. But the more information you ask for, the less likely folks are going to respond. "Conversion rates" are generally proportional to the amount of information requested. This holds especially true for lead generating conversions.

Lead generation is a value exchange. Your clients expect to get something of value from you in exchange for their information. What they have to provide should not be one iota more than they perceive necessary! If you want more information, provide more value in proportion to the request. You want my shoe size for your newsletter? Offer me a free pair of socks after I've received the newsletter. You get the idea...

5. Help Them See It - No two ways about it, if clients can't quickly make visual heads or tails of your content, they won't stick around and you won't generate a lead. Layout matters. Evaluate your copy for scannability and skimmability. Use "eye-tracking principles" so clients can find what they expect to find where they expect to find it. (You should trust someone you know outside of Real Estate to do your evaluations).

6. Qualify Better - It is your desire to help your clients qualify their needs as soon as they land on your site. When you provide a means for them to find what they want and get to it quickly, you build rapport and help your clients feel understood. It's a process that begins on the home page (or a well-designed landing page).

But not all clients know exactly what they want. Some may not be in a buying mood. That doesn't mean they won't buy. An exceptional qualification scheme is critical to getting a customer and converting them to a client. It's just as critical to generating a lead. Let visitors know briefly who you are, what you do, and what you offer. You're more likely to persuade them to become a lead.

7. Test, Measure And Optimize - Improving lead generation means evaluating what you've done so you can figure out how to do it better.

Web analytics to consider include:

Responses: How many folks subscribed to your newsletter, or opted in to your e-mail list?

Time spent on site: How long do visitors stick around?

Reject rates, especially on contact pages: Where do folks bail out of your site? Are you losing visitors just when you think you have them?

Leads-to-close ratio: Is there a connection between perception and satisfaction?

Try incorporating one or two of these suggestions and see what happens. Better still, make these the centerpiece of your site's conversion philosophy, and watch those leads roll in!

So – How do you market yourself? A Website?



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New members listed represent those joining between the dates of May 25, 2006 and June 29, 2006

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®
555 BENFIELD ROAD
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Tom Quattlebaum, Chief Executive Officer